

THE MEASURE

A JOURNAL OF POETRY



Four Poems by Robinson Jeffers - - - - -
Lyrics by Loretta Roche, Philip Gray, Elizabeth
Thomas and Others - - - - -

Earth Moods and Tiger Joy Reviewed

\$2.50 by the Year - - - - - Single Copies 25c

Editorial Office - - - 223 West 15th Street, New York, N. Y.

Published Monthly - - - - - Cornwall, N. Y.

Number 58 - - - - - December, 1925

Entered as second-class matter February 4, 1924, at the post office at Cornwall, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1876

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Adjustment

WERE I always to be witness and not part
Of the world's deadly and wonderful destinies
I should weed life out of my limbs and heart
To charge it wholly on these wakeful eyes.
Like a state-spy at some imperial feast,
Pale foreigner who privily forbears
The spirit-dissolving grape that's god or beast
To the other and unbridled banqueters,
I should wax colder while the world more hot:
As gazing down oceans of frozen air
A watchman on a peak despises not
Spearmen who stride the plain, but will not share
Their pride nor the iron and driving wills that thresh
From inward the faint limbs and fragile flesh.

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Two Garden-Marbles

ALCIBIADES

WHEN marble Athens was the perfect flower of the world
Though the new temples were not stripped of scaffolding yet,
This was the flower of Athens, of Hellas, the youth and beauty
Incarnate, and the sweet corruption sister of ripeness.
He was three times a traitor and most loved of men,
He was the people's dearest poison and loveliest pride,
Who purple-robed and reeling from Nemea's embrace
Mastered the sensual atom-streams of the agora.
There never was a demagogue so beautiful,
And never so voluptuous leader of spears and ships.
The harlots with their painted mouths and Socrates
With the deep brow taught him alternate sorts of wisdom.
The Spartan women loved his sword, his enemies trembled
From the Eros handling thunder that was carved on his shield.

ALEXANDER

THIS is the boy who passed the purple Hellespont
With forty thousand spearmen and at Ilion mounds
Made sacrifice before Athena while his eyes
Sparkled with boyish desire of the ocean-belted earth.
Philip's Epirot bride Olympias meddled with wild
Worship on the Samothracian slope under black firs.
Was it Dionysus or his father in serpent's form
Crawled to her bed, and she conceived and bore this child?
This lion who leaped the Mallian wall and fought alone,
Wounded, insane, triumphant; this is the one who dying
Willed all to the strongest man foreseeing odd funeral games.
But here he is carved the way he sat in conquered Babylon
Drunken with Persian wine and empire, nodding "I knew
The sons of God die young," and smiled at the angry prophets.

Clouds at Evening

ENORMOUS cloud-mountains that form over Point Lobos and
 into the sunset,
Figures of fire on the walls of to-night's storm,
Foam of gold in gorges of fire, and the great file of warrior angels:
Dreams gathering in the curded brain of the earth—
The sky the brain-vault—on the threshold of sleep: poor earth, you
 like your children
By inordinate desires tortured, make dreams?
Storms more enormous, wars nobler, more toppling mountains, more
 jewelled waters, more free
Fires on impossible headlands . . . as a poor girl
Wishing her lover taller and more desirous, and herself maned with
 gold,
Dreams the world right, in the cold bed, about dawn.
Dreams are beautiful; the slaves of form are beautiful also; I have
 grown to believe
A stone is a better pillow than many visions.

Summer Holiday

WHEN the sun shouts and people abound
 One thinks there were the ages of stone and the age of bronze
And the iron age; iron the unstable metal;
Steel made of iron, unstable as his mother; the towered-up cities
Will be stains of rust on mounds of plaster.
Roots will not pierce the heaps for a time, kind rains will cure them,
Then nothing will remain of the iron age
And all these people but a thigh-bone or so, a poem
Stuck in the world's thought, splinters of glass
In the rubbish dumps, a concrete dam far off in the mountain . . .

Robinson Jeffers

To a Young Girl

THOUGH you wear brown and orange with an air
 Of gallantry that fits a russet day,
You are not autumn's child, although you say
The patterns of November—gray boughs bare
Against dull sky—are more to you than all
The tricks of April with the flowering quince.
You say you tired of those designs, long since,
And summer hangs upon you like a pall.

This is a web of fancy you have spun;
You give allegiance to a month more kind
Than that one which holds promise of first snow,
The frosty humors of an autumn mind
Are not possessed by you, whose years must grow
Nourished by warm munificence of sun.

Lyric

WHAT was my youth to me
 But a bitter seeking
After a witch light, turning
Across dark meadow,
And a faint voice crying?

Nothing alive or free,
No sure heart speaking,
Only the slow burning
Of beauty blackened to shadow
And an echo dying.

Loretta Roche

“Born Dumb in Darkness”

CAREERS of coral elevate sea-bound
Atolls where science may restore her sails,
And shelter calm lagoons which hide from gales
Wave-beaten hearts that trail a song unfound;
For they can leave, from mouths without one sound,
Estate residual more than bird whose wails
Die on the wind; and more than fish that pales
With glitter uncemented to the ground.

By sucking lime from briny circumstance
One polyp may propose a continent;
Then vain ambitions never worry these
Who cannot fail, in spite of fate and chance?
Born dumb in darkness they are malcontent
That winds can sing on sunset-lacquered seas.

Katherine Newton

“Stone Looks Not Out-----”

STONE looks not out from stone,
But myriad eyes,
From worlds that revolve alone
Where the small rock lies.

What souls to Paradise
Swiftly whirl
From this cosmos of no size
That here I hurl?

Elizabeth Thomas

And If You Fear The Darkness

AND if you fear the darkness that must fall
Await it not below where twilight wreaks
A sooty sequel to a dun-dull day,
But come with me onto the silent peaks
Of green-faced mountains, cool and brave and tall,
Where day lies singing in a jeweled bay.

O the burst of color I have seen
Above the hills when twilight sweeps the sky!—
The opal, topaz, ruby, amethyst,
The flaming waves of purple, gold and green—
Where day lies crying one last colored cry
Before it sinks into the endless mist. . .

To a Little Girl

IN your vague world of surface certainties
You are a potentate by grace divine,
Waving your grand imperious decrees—
Your "Come!" and "Go!" your "Give!" and "Me" and "Mine!"—
With the slim gesture of stupendous faith:
Dolly must eat; dolly must sleep; the train
Shall pass or not. Reality and wraith
Have but to yield to you, august and vain.

In your vague world there is a scheme of things
More lucid than the one you soon must know—
A square of blocks of primal colorings
And each block has its own place in a row.
I stand in wistful wonder at your door
To hear the wisdom of your simple lore.

N. Bryllion Fagin

Eye-Minded Blindman

DAY after day,
Since I have lost my eyes,
I go feeling about and listening
Through little starts and cries;
But nothing verifies
My brain's blurring pictures,
Because my ears and fingers
Send in strange fumbling lies.

Ronald Gordon

Sculpture

ENDURABLE this loneliness,
If but my urgent hands may press
Down to its core their trembling way,
There to unearth the yearning clay
That waits for sculpture into song,
Or even into man, hewn strong,
A cynic image of the Lord,
Naked as a smiling sword.

Philip Gray

Elegy

THE house stood open to the wind that morning
Doors wide and windows high as though it were
An ordinary cleaning day of spring—
The wind rocked through the place
Like a wild nimble-stepping elephant!
The carpets mounds beneath his springy tread.

* * * * *

He had been merry in his life and droll
And sad and whimsical: he would have liked
Wind on his face and yellow rose leaves skirling
Under the bed, and tapping
On the hard wood in corners. He would have liked
Them drifted
From his small, leafy bushes on the terrace—
A pile across his knees smelling of tea
And lady bugs and dust. He would have liked
Doors banging round him as he lay, smiling,
All white and still, waiting his burial.
The sun shone down between high moving clouds that made
A counter march of shade and lifting sea
With myriads of mingled, flat-gold shields
Which broke as surf upon the gray shale beach
And filled a quiet house with shouting, and
Wide doors with mournfulness.

Helen Campbell

Portrait

YOUR eyes were windows—
So my fancy said—
That guarded treasures
Greatly coveted.

I wish I had not pried!
For there, on looking through,
I saw but an empty room—
A little dusty, too.

Dorothy Cruikshank

The Measure & A Journal of Poetry

Published monthly by the Editors at 223 West 15th St., New York

Edited by Léonie Adams, Joseph Auslander, Louise Bogan, Padraic Colum, Rolfe Humphries, George O'Neil, E. Merrill Root, Pitts Sanborn, Genevieve Taggard. From these nine an active editor is elected quarterly.

Associate Editors—Hervey Allen, and Frank Ernest Hill.

Executive Secretary—Lindley Williams Hubbell.

Apologia pro Specie Sua

IT is profitable, at times, to read the ancients, and to realize that they, too, had their geese to pluck. What better words than these could we write today, tho we had the tongues of men and of angels?

"Thy No-thing of an Intended poem, O poet who hast looked merely to reviewers, copyrights, booksellers, popularities, behold it was not yet become a Thing; for the truth is not in it! Though printed, hot pressed, reviewed, celebrated, sold to the twentieth edition: what is all that? The Thing, in philosophical uncommercial language is still a No-Thing, mostly semblance and deception of the sight;—benign Oblivion incessantly gnawing at it, impatient till Chaos, to which it belongs, do reabsorb it!"

Indeed, the more a free spirit knows of "modern poetry," and especially of its movements (it moves in a mysterious way its wonders to perform), the less he likes it. The more he learns of "poets," the less he wants to be one; the more he learns of "poetry," the less he wants to write it. Like Earnest Pontifex gazing at the clergyman, he looks at a modern "poet" (or at the editor of a "poetry" magazine) and says, "There, but for the grace of God, go I!"

E. M. R.

A Moving Row

Earth Moods and Other Poems. By Hervey Allen.
Harper and Brothers. New York, 1925.

MUSEUMS contain their specimens geological and prehistoric, their silent reminders of Greece and Carthage, their rooms Egyptian where men may contemplate royalty descended to mummy-dust. As material records of science and art they indicate the fruits of expeditions. Independent of this collected data are messages that fire the imagination with strange desires, a yearning to eliminate centuries and know the moods of ancient days and their people.

Mr. Allen, uniting the scientist's and archaeologist's purpose with these desires through a poet's vision, has with broad conception and grasp of subject, translated this message into lines of "Saga Of The North," the first poem of his "Earth Moods." There is something the exacting methods of research can never encase in glass. It requires the unfettered lines of poetry and the freedom of spiritual perception to liberate such emotions and make them apparent for others. The unseen in us then receives the unseen.

The author opens a vast horizon where his poetry explores from the stars. One senses a panorama as an aviator beholds it. Telescopic instruments of precision, however, are too limited for his "astronomical perspective." We become intimate with the moods and passions of those who spoke in Punic and heard "the crack of Carthaginian whips across the backs of frozen elephants." Historical events flash from the pages in vivid processional. Mr. Allen paints thrilling murals with a sure brush, pictures that become realities in movement seen from a height in the silence of time. It is an unusual mental experience. Moreover, he employs sculpture to advantage. Originality abounds in the translation of his ideas. His words are accurate. One is conscious of the thoughts which must have prevailed when the events occurred. One is also deeply conscious of the tragedy in these events, the tragedy and pathos so elemental in human struggles either for achievement or surrender. My only regret is that "Saga Of The North" ends with line and metre of comparative weakness.

The "Saga Of Leif The Lucky" is also notable as a poem with perspective and historical interest. One feels that Leif was as courageous as he was lucky. The metre of moving oars is suggestive and appropriate, likewise the presence of Leif Erikson's mood and intention in the consciousness of Columbus driving toward San Salvador. The same great purpose continues to be manifested through generations until accomplished.

It is very evident that Mr. Allen has a keen perception for tides and things moving with them, even a "Funeral At High Tide" and its dark relationship to passing waters

*"Where muddy bubbles plop their scummy lips,
And the unholy fiddlers sit in cavern doors
To brandish fists,"*

where contrasting tides and human emotions terminate in the despair that would evade a question later to be answered, and alone. Out-going tides leave much that is undesirable in the mud of events. Mr. Allen creates an atmosphere and delineates his people skilfully. As a painter knows what to include and what to omit, so does he create with words, establishing a proper sense of values.

In the succeeding poem the man and woman were truly "Children Of Earth" in that "the flame that once had warmed them had gone out." Even so, earth itself could not finally warm them as dust. Too much earth in one will ultimate in too much in the earth. We must find within ourselves another kingdom than rocks or salt-water. Furthermore, those who love the hills are not stone blind nor those who love the sea without a fair sense of altitude. All women do not walk as Ruth did. In this poem we note Mr. Allen's ability to use human emotions as color in painting his pictures.

In "The Fire Thief" and "The Sea Horse," the author passes from the emotions and purposes associated with human endeavors to a realm less intimate and familiar. Extreme heights removed from earth and great sea-depths predominate in their themes. There is a wealth of imagery. One is reminded that elemental struggles and the need for celestial fire are as apparent now as then. Prometheus' relation to civilization was not a complete demonstration. "The valley with its girls and grapes" indicate that man's feet are still on the earth though aviation has progressed. The response to gravity is just as emphatic as before. Sea magic and colorful fantasy

ride through lines of "The Sea Horse." Here are weird situations and strange experiences, though on page 101, "swoon" and "moon" recall eleven preceding pages where these words or the same rhyming sound are used, with additional use through other lines of "rune" and "tune."

There are shorter poems dealing partly with man's relation to city and country, mystical and beautiful with suggestions of nights in the open. We must realize, however, that one's thoughts can be as inspired among walls and towers as elsewhere. There is much to be said for personal contact and association. The most vital poetry must ever be in the heart. A landscape may serve as a great painting, but it is in the portrait that one gazes deepest, for here character and human emotions are recorded. Though wind in the trees makes a pleasant sound, a symphony is a portrait of the soul. After all, thoughts cannot be confined nor can man's being measure beyond his consciousness. Cities may loose old meadows and rocks predominate, but these are good foundations for great architecture and miracles in stone. We are more likely to be reminded in "long cataracts of streets . . . that underneath the stones are" modern facilities necessary for advancement and not "Ilium's fate." Contrast in a volume between greater and lesser poems indicate that much can be added by reduction.

There are places in a museum where we pause longest. Just so, we return to certain pages in this collection. There are poems we can enter and become a part of, while with others we can never be intimately associated. The first part of "Earth Moods" is for me the greatest. Mr. Allen has measured startling dimensions along the world's movements, indicating that victories are not progressive unless the battles are won within ourselves. The subjects are records of his comprehending vision and the result is praiseworthy.

Prescott Hoard

Tiger and Moon

(*Tiger Joy*, By Stephen Vincent Benét. George H. Doran & Co.)

IS the Tiger, Joy, Stephen Vincent Benét's whimsicality? Sometimes this whimsicality stretches out a clawed paw. And again it pounces down upon a delicious morsel of thought with an almost terrible snarl. Certainly this tiger too, like Shelley's, can be moon-charmed; the moon is Mr. Benét's symbol for lyric peace.

But quite aside from either Tiger or Moon there are the several ballads, two of which are familiar to us as prize-winners (I believe I am right in remembering that *The Mountain Whippoorwill* won some prize, and, of course, everyone remembers *King David* of Nation Prize fame). It is not strange that critics comment favorably on Mr. Benét's balladry; these narratives are true to type, vigorous, quickly unfolded, fantastic and melodramatic. The ballad technique is excellent; the rhythm has the rush and intensity necessary to the telling of such tales. If some of the most beautiful passages are too elaborate for true ballad, we cannot complain, for Mr. Benét follows excellent precedent in such lines as these:

*She was milk of the pearl.
She was naked as light.
She was fire in the night,
White fire of the pearl.
And—she was a girl.*

To me Mr. Benét's lyrics are more interesting than his ballads. They give more clearly the essence of Mr. Benét's work—an essence summed up in his own words:

*Therefore, in neither anguish nor relief,
I offer to the shadow in the air
No image of a monumental grief
To mock its transience from a stony chair,

Nor any tablets edged in rusty black.
Only a branch of maple, gathered high
When the crisp air first tastes of applejack,
And the blue smokes of Autumn stain the sky.*

No image of a monumental grief—only a branch of maple gathered high, a dash of vivid color, a shout from a hill, a dauntless feather in a dark cap, a graceful gesture acknowledging life's jovial

entertainment even though bitter wine be served—these are Mr. Benét's artistic reticence. For him the depths are better left unhinted at. There is little real passion in these lyrics, little significant emotion. But there is grace, whimsy, cleverness, fancy, and, most of all, delight. Many poems not so entitled are "Nonsense Songs" as much as is:

*Rosemary, Rosemary, let down your hair!
The cow's in the hammock, the crows in the chair!*

Rosemary herself is a provocative and subtle personality

*Wise child, clean friend, adoration, light arrow of God, white flame,
I would break my body to pieces to call you by your name.*

After all, my grievance is only that I do not find in Mr. Benét's lyrics the intensity to which, for me, great lyrics must descend or ascend. These tiger-like whimsies these moon-charmed sentiments leave me a little cold. The technique is excellent, but the significance of thought is slight. I am asking for no moral tone nor for a universal significance, merely for complete and searching sincerity. I find instead—the maple branch gathered high.

Perhaps this is enough. There are qualities of very good poetry here. Only the epitaphs fail for lack of originality. The other poems have always Mr. Benét's magic. Still I think I like best the completely charmed tiger of the sonnets or of:

All Night Long.

*We were in bed by nine, but she did not hear the clock,
She lay in her quiet first sleep, soft-breathing head by her arm,
And the rising, radiant moon spilled silver out of its crock
On her hair and forehead and eyes as we rested, gentle and warm.
All night long it remained, that calm, compassionate sheet,
All the long night it wrapped us in whiteness like ermine-fur,
I did not sleep all the night, but lay, with wings on my feet,
Still, the cool at my lips, seeing her, worshipping her.
Oh, the bright sparks of dawn when day broke, burning and wild!
Oh, the first waking glance from her sleepy, beautiful eyes!
With a heart and mind newborn as a naked, young, golden child,
I took her into my arms. We saw the morning arise!*

Eda Lou Walton

Notes and Comment

MR. Root's article on Mr. Mencken in the October number has brought to this office many commendatory letters and notes. At the same time, Mr. Root writes to regret that when his article was written Mr. Mencken had not yet published, to the world his latest critical manifesto. In the October number of *The American Mercury* nearly a score of poets were reviewed in more or less facetious strain; but this editor believes that Mr. Mencken was perfectly sincere in the statement that of all the poets under consideration, his own preference was for the work of Miss Dorothy Dow. Inasmuch as the poems of Emily Dickinson were also included in the catalogue, we can only suggest that Mr. Mencken change the caption over this department of his magazine to *I Confess!*

The Measure needs for its files a few copies of Nos. 1, 8, and 9. Any subscribers possessing these numbers, and wishing to dispose of them are asked to correspond with the business office.

The Nation announces its annual poetry prize of \$100, condition of the contest being unchanged from those of past years.

Among the many exchanges that reach the desk of *The Measure*, none has afforded this editor more delight than Volume I, Number 1, of *Poetic Thrills*, a poets' folio, published in Chillicothe, Ohio. The editorial policy of the magazine is announced with splendid clarity: "You do not have to be on our staff to be recognized in *Poetic Thrills*. . . You only have to be a SUBSCRIBER at ONE DOLLAR A YEAR to be recognized in these pages and find expression." Under these conditions, we feel that the newcomer is to be trebly congratulated on securing for its first number poems by such bards as William Makepeace Thackeray, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Burns, Job, Samuel Francis Smith, Rouget de Lisle, and King David.

The editor in charge of *Poetic Thrills* is Gertrude Perry West. This lady, in case you should not know, is the author of '*Teen Days, the Love to a First Sweetheart*'—(not the first sweetheart, mind you!)—the poem that brought her recognition as the only North Carolinian ever nominated to the National Hall of Fame, and making her the most "distinguished American citizen, as well as poet."

We take pleasure in reprinting the following lyric by this remarkable woman:

Bladen

*"Here's to the county where the sun doth shine
Brightest on the sand-hill pine;
Here's to the county of ham and corn;
Progressive Bladen, where I was born!"*

To encourage and foster, if possible, similar growth in others, *Poetic Thrills* generously announces a \$25 prize for the best pastoral, epic or narrative poem entered in contest between September 1, 1925, and January, 1927. We quote the final stanza of one poem that has already appeared:

*"Who is this Angel of Mercy?
This Power Behind the Throne?
It is native son, James B. Duke?
But this you soon would have known,
For with his hydraulic pumps—
This you'll know very soon—
The whole "dammed" state is humming!
Is now on a prosperous boom!"*

CONTRIBUTORS

ROBINSON JEFFERS sends us these four poems from his Falcon Tower in Carmel, California. Mr. Jeffers' book, *Roan Stallion*, will shortly be reviewed in *The Measure*.

N. BRYLLION FAGIN has appeared in many reviews and periodicals, but never before in this one. He is professor of English at the University of Baltimore.

PHILIP GRAY is a pen name used by the head of a large psychiatric social service organization in New York City.

PREScott HOARD has appeared in these pages before as poet rather than reviewer.

EDA LOU WALTON'S book of Indian poems will soon be published by Dutton.

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Publication Office at Cornwall, N. Y.

Editorial Office at 223 West Fifteenth Street, New York City

Subscription \$2.50 a year

Single Copies 25 cents

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